

John Nelson
1893-1916: age at death 23
Student of the Society of the Sacred Mission

Family History

John – known as Jack – was born in Sparham, Norwich on 29 August 1893, and he was baptised on 21 September 1893. His mother was Fanny (nee Burrows), who was born in the City of London, Middlesex. His father was Thomas George who seems to have had many professions and to be reasonably well-off.

- 1881: Farmer, employing 12 men and 3 boys, a housemaid, Cook and Nurserymaid
- 1891: Farmer – the number of agricultural workers is not listed but live-in household staff included a Nursery Governess, Cook, Housemaid, Nursery help, professional nurse, assistant nurse (the first son had just been born)
- 1901: Estate Agents Clerk – employing a Governess and general servant
- 1911: Traveller in the Wine Trade

In 1901 they lived on Bradfield Road, Swaffield, North Walsham, Norfolk. By this date it is likely that his mother had died as her name is not on the census returns for that year but his aunt Enity was living with the family.

In addition to John, there were five other children. Millicent, Marjorie, Harry and Charles, all older than him, and Fanny, a year younger. Ten years' later, Marjorie was unmarried and lived at home, Harry was a Clerk to an Estate Agent and Charles a joiner, while Fanny was at school.

In 1906, John was admitted as a pupil at Christ's Hospital, Sussex having been presented to the School by the Rt Hon, The Earl of Leicester.



John Nelson is the last boy on the right side of the middle row

He was discharged three years later and by 1911 was working as a 'Clerk to a firm of contractors'. The Society's newsletter claims that he 'found his first preparation for the priesthood in the valuable training of City life, that large university of human study'. He joined the Society in 1914.

Military History

After just one term at Kelham he enlisted as a private in the 8th Bn King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and received a commission to second lieutenant. He was reported as wounded on 1st July 1916, then 'wounded and missing'. This was probably at the Battle of Albert, which, between 1-13 July 1916, was the first of the Anglo-French offensive operations in the Battle of the Somme; there were about 60,000 casualties on the first day when John is thought to have died.

According to the Society's Newsletter, one report said that his body had been seen in the German trenches, but further bombing removed all trace. However, this report was either incorrect or his body was identified later, as he is recorded as being buried at Blighty Valley Cemetery, Authuille Wood, Plot V, Row G, grave 28.

Find my past: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Nottinghamshire County Council Great War Roll of Honour:

<https://secure.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour/>

Forces War Records: <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission: <https://www.cwgc.org/>

Christ's Hospital Museum: <http://www.chmuseum.org.uk/>

Society of the Sacred Mission Quarterly Newsletter, Borthwick Institute:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/>